

Message Text

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47

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 PM-04

NSC-05 SS-15 SAM-01 OMB-01 IO-13 /061 W

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O R 011324Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8903

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE DAMASCUS 5036

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN CABINET SHIFT

1. AUG. 1 DAMASCUS AFTERNOON NEWS BROADCAST ANNOUNCED LONG EXPECTED RESIGNATION OF PRIMIN MAHMUD AYOUBI AND HIS GOVERNMENT. PRESIDENT ASAD HAS ACCEPTED AYOUBI'S RESIGNATION AND CALLED ON MAJOR GENERAL ABD AL-RAHMAN KHULAYFAWI TO FORM NEW CABINET.

2. COMMENT: KHULAYFAWI HAS LONG BEEN CONSIDERED LEADING CONTENDER FOR PRIME MINISTERSHIP. AS FORMER PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND CURRENTLY BAATH PARTY REGIONAL COMMAND MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, HE POSSESSES THE EXPERIENCE, PARTY AND MILITARY STANDING, AND LOYALTY TO PRES. ASAD WHICH ARE CONSIDERED PREREQUISITES FOR THE JOB. HE IS ALSO A SUNNI FROM A PROMINENT DAMASCUS FAMILY, AS WAS AYOUBI, AND WILL THUS PRESERVE REPRESENTATIONAL CHARACTER OF REGIME OFTEN ACCUSED OF BEING OVERLY ALAWITE IN COM-
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POSITION. HE HAS REPUTATION OF BEING STRONG PERSONALITY,

EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATOR AND PRAGMATIC IN OUTLOOK. PRIME DISABILITY IS CONSIDERED HIS HEALTH AS HE UNDERWENT CANCER OPERATION IN 1970 IN LONDON AND HAS RETURNED THERE ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS FOR COBALT TREATMENTS.

3. CABINET CHANGE HAS BEEN LONG EXPECTED AND RUMORS OF ITS IMMINENCE HAD INCREASED IN RECENT WEEKS. PRES. ASAD'S PREOCCUPATION WITH LEBANESE CRISIS AND HIS DESIRE NOT TO MAKE GOVERNMENT SHIFTS AT TIME OF EXTENSIVE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PRESSURES ON HIS REGIME WERE GENERALLY TAKEN TO BE PRINCIPAL REASONS FOR DELAY. OUR INITIAL REACTION TO ANNOUNCEMENT IS THAT WITH SYRIAN TROOPS FIRMLY ENSCONSED IN LEBANON AND WITH SYRO-PALESTINIAN ACCORD SIGNED (THOUGH NOT YET IMPLEMENTED), ASAD BELIEVES HIMSELF SECURELY ENOUGH IN CONTROL OF SITUATION TO GO FORWARD WITH CABINET CHANGE. JUST HOW EXTENSIVE A CHANGE IT WILL BE MUST AWAIT CONCLUSION OF KHULAYFAW'S CONSULTATIONS, BUT IT IS EXPECTED THAT MANY KEY MINISTERS WILL RETAIN THEIR POSITIONS.
PELLETREAU

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Message Attributes

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